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Asia Pacific Human Rights NGOs - Facilitating Team

Newsletter No. 1 **May 1994**

Introduction:

An Asia Pacific Human Rights NGO Follow-Up meeting to the World Conference on Human Rights was held in Bangkok on 2 -3 February 1994. Fifty-eight Human Rights Organizations were present at this meeting. The meeting followed a very successful Asia Pacific NGO participation in the Vienna World Conference itself.

The proceedings and results of the March 1993 meeting is contained in the report entitled **"Our Voice"**. It also contains the Bangkok NGO Declaration which states that we, the Asia Pacific Peoples, assert the universality and indivisibility of human rights, contrary to the position of many governments of the region who assert that human rights are primarily western. This NGO Declaration has since become the common platform for human rights advocacy in the Asia Pacific and provides the framework for ongoing NGO human rights work on an Asia Pacific basis.

The February 1994 follow up meeting, after reviewing the various activities pre and post the Vienna Conference, went on to discuss the mechanism as to how this unity in purpose of Asia Pacific human rights NGOs could continue in the future so as to build on the cooperation that had developed during 1993.

The meeting resolved to meet as an open NGO congress on a biennial basis. Between the follow-up meeting and the first open congress a facilitation team would be established and emphasis was put on the building of representative sub-regional networks.

The role of the Facilitating Team was to ensure the continuing cooperation and communication among human rights NGOs of Asia Pacific who voluntarily subscribe to the process. This team to be made up of at least 9 persons selected on a sectoral and sub-regional basis.

Liaison Service Contact Address: P.O. Box 26, Bungthonglang, Bangkok 10242, Thailand
Tel. (662) 377 9357, 370 2701 Fax: (662) 374 0464, 370 1202

The Facilitating Team was tasked to do the following:

a) facilitate the development, distribution of and access to a data base of Asia Pacific human rights and other NGOs;
b) facilitate the flow of information among NGOs and sectors of the region on common issues and events of common interest and to expand the use of e-mail and other appropriate methods towards this purpose;
c) enhance the effectiveness of urgent actions and appeals in the region for human rights protection;
d) facilitate the holding of the next regional congress;
e) between this meeting and the next regional congress, should any policy questions arise, the Facilitating Team shall transmit these questions to sub-regional and national NGOs and NGOs working on sectoral issues.

The members of the first Facilitating Team as constituted at the follow-up meeting will work until the next congress unless changed by the NGOs within the relevant sub-region or sector by a method to be determined by them.

It was also decided that a liaison service should be located in an already existing NGO in the region with the necessary resources and experience. Such a liaison service would assist the Facilitating Team, assist and task forces created and to act as the communication channel between the Facilitating Team and regional human rights NGOs.

The Facilitating Team was mandated to raise funds for the activities described above.

In conclusion, the World Conference on Human Rights took some steps to strengthen human rights standard and mechanisms in spite of opposition from many governments of our region.

However like all Conferences of this type it should be considered not as the end of a process but a beginning. Asia Pacific human rights NGOs are taking this new process seriously. Within our region some of the worst human rights violations are increasing on a daily basis. The building of effective links and cooperation between human rights NGOs within our region is one concrete way that we can make our contribution to building a region and a world where human rights are respected and not abused.

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Facilitating Team established

The follow-up meeting nominated and elected the following persons as the Facilitating Team members:

Lopeti Senituli
Pacific Concern Resources Center (PCRC) - *Pacific*

Chun Jung-bae
Korean Network for the World Conference on Human Rights - *East Asia*

Boonthan T. Verawongse
Coordinating Committee of Human Rights Organizations in Thailand (CCHROT)/ Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD) - *Southeast Asia*

Ravi Nair
South Asia Human Rights Documentation Center (SAHRDC) - *South Asia*

Fateh Azzam *(Al Haq)* - *West Asia*

Sara Hossain
Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) - *Women*

Vitit Muntarbhorn *
Child Rights Asianet - *Children*
Nicola Bullard *
End Child Prostitutions in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) - *Children*
* *Co-representatives*

Luithui Luingam
Asia Indigenous People Pact (AIPP) - *Indigenous*

Robert Reid
Asia Pacific Workers Solidarity Links (APWSL) - *Workers*

Xiao Qiang
Human Rights in China (HRIC) - *China*

Samydorai Sinapan
Asian Centre for the Progress of Peoples (ACPP)/HOTLINE - *Regional*

Liaison Service Secretariat:

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Contact person: Boonthan T. Verawongse

UPDATE NEWS

NLC: The Post Vienna Meeting: NLC ended - NILC started

NLC (NGO Liaison Committee) set up at the end of the WCHR in Vienna convened it first meeting on February 21-23 in Geneva. Asia Pacific region was represented by Cecilia Jimenez (PAHRA), Randa Siniora (AL Haq), and Francis Yi (KONUCH). Lopeti was unable to attend but submitted a written report. Pat Walsh represented Australia. International NGOs such as AI, ICJ, WCC, Pax Christi, ere represented. Children were not represented and only part of the Indigenous peoples.

The meeting discussed focussed almost entirely on the future of the NLC, through the agenda did allow for discussion on important issues such as the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights, Uppsala Human Rights Congress, Beijing World Conference on Women, World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), and the Vienna Program of Action. There is general support for continuing the NLC, provided it is simple with a minimalist role. In the mean time, there is unanimous resistance to any form of unrepresentative super-NGO. It was recognized that national/ regional work is primary and essential to an effective NLC and the NLC must work to foster this. One of the key issues is the Southern NGO access to the UN system needs to be increased and promoted.

The meeting decided that the NLC will continue for another 12 months and be known as the NGO Interim Liaison Committee (NILC). Internet will continue to serve as the secretariat. The next meeting will be in Geneva during the CHR 51 in early 1995.

New Masterlist of Human Rights NGOs available:

Masterlist of Human Rights NGOs worldwide: 4,500 entries. Available from *Human Rights, c/o University of Ottawa, 57 Louis Pasteur, Ottawa, Ontario K1N 6N5, Canada. Tel (1-613) 564 3492. Fax (1-613) 564 4054.*

Asia Pacific Consultation on World Summit for Social Development:

44 organizations gathered in Bangkok from May 2-3 for the Asia Pacific Consultation on World Summit for Social Development. It was a very first time at the regional level to discuss the preparation of the said summit. This consultation was part of the recommendation from the Follow-Up meeting in February. The main objectives of the consultation are to share the information for preparatory process and critique of conceptual approach to the World Summit; to initiate the process to develop an asia Pacific agenda for the Summit; to develop the Asia Pacific input, participation in the preparatory process as well as strategise and work out an appropriate mechanism for the regional process leading to the Summit in March 1995.

At the Asia Pacific regional level, there will be some processes and meetings as state below:

June 16 - 18, Manila - organised by the PRRM and other regional organizations e.g. ASPBAE, APPROTECH-Asia, El Taller, ISIS, etc.
July 12 - 25, Bangkok - jointly organized by the UN/ ESCAP and the ICVA/ ICSW

The Task Force on Economic Rights (which set up during the Follow-Up meeting in February) had met on 5 May and shared the ideas on how the Asia Pacific Human Rights NGOs can involve in this process of the WSSD since not many human rights groups participated at this consultation even in the global process. There is some suggestion that 1) Common strategy is needed; 2) the broader and independent consultation for the Asia Pacific NGOs/ POs to be convened before the third Preparatory Committee meeting which will take place in January 1995 in New York. If there is a broader common agreement among the Asia Pacific NGOs, the meeting can be organized in later part of the year, perhaps late November or early December 1994.

Documents and the list of key/ important documents (including the report of the May 2-3 Consultation, list of Government Delegation to the World Summit, etc.) related to WSSD are *available at the Liaison Service Secretariat (ACFOD)* both in the soft (diskettes 3.5" in Wordperfect 5.1 format) and hard copy (papers). Write to us if you want !

Hong Kong Human Rights Commission organized the Diplomacy Training

From 1 - 5 April, Hong Kong Human Rights Commission (HKHRC) headed by Ho Hei Wah, its Chairperson, organized a first training on the utilization of international human rights instruments/ mechanism for the protection and promotion of human rights. 60 participants took part in the 4 full days training. Ravi Nair (SAHRDC) and John Scott-Murphy (DTP) were amongst the resource persons and facilitators of the training.

Korea's new coordinating body set up

The Korean Network for the UN World Conference on Human Rights (KONUCH) was formed earlier in preparation towards the Vienna World Conference. After Vienna, a series of meetings taken place and finally there is a general agreement among the particpated organizations to set up the new and more permanent coordinating body of the human rights organizations called *'Korean Human Rights Network' (KOHRNET)*. The first Assembly will be held in late May 1994. Congratulation and Welcome to the human rights movement.

South East Asia Human Rights Network (SEANET)

During the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, an informal network of the human rights organizations in Southeast Asia was established. It aims at the communication, campaign and action on the respective issues on human rights violation and the promotion of human rights, development, democracy in the region. One of the first activities is the preparation for the Southeast Asia Meeting on Human Rights and Development which will be convened on July 20-25 prior to the ASEAN Summit and Asian Regional Forum in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting will focused on the current development in the region such as the continuing human rights violation in Burma, East Timor, human rights, development, national and regional security as well as the national and regional human rights instruments/ mechanism. For more information, contact *Sivarasa Rasiah (SUARAM, Malaysia) Tel. (603) 703 9266 Fax. (603) 703 2784.*

'Australian Forum of Human Rights Organizations' formed

The new coordinating body had been formed to pursue the human rights work after the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights. *Tel/ Fax. (61 2) 559 2269.*

South Asia Forum on Human Rights initiated the People's SAARC

South Asian Human Rights Consultative Meeting held in Kathmandu on 18-19 May to set up the 'People's SAARC' for the promotion of South Asian Regional Cooperation at the grassroots level. The participants took out a peace procession and handed in a memorandum to SAARC Secretary General Yadav Kant Silval at the SAARC Secretariat. The memorandum has pledge widening national and regional dialogues towards the formation and strengthening the people - people cooperation. One of the 18 points mentioned in the memorandum refers to the severe restrictions on the movement of people and informationn within SAARC region.

Women Activists on the move towards the Forth International Women's Conference

There are many meetings, workshops, consultations, dialogues in preparation for the Women's Conference in Beijing, 30 August - 8 September 1995. The Asia Preparatory Committee meeting for Women's Conference sponsored by UN/ESCAP will be held in Jakarta from 7 - 14 June 1994.

For further information on the women process, please contact:
* *Salbiah Ahmad (APWLD, Malaysia) at Tel. (603) 2550648-9 Fax. (603) 2541371 or*
* *Nelia Sancho Liao (AWHRC, Philippines) at Tel./Fax (632) 999437, 921 5571 or*
* *Sr.Mary Soledad (TW-MAE-W, Philippines) at Tel. (632) 786469 Fax. (632) 791026*

Asian Women Tribunal:

The Women Tribunal: Development Aggression Violation of Women's Human Rights will be held from 15 - 16 October 1994 in Bangkok, Thailand. This is part of the process in preparation for the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen) and the International Women's Conference (Beijing). 100 - 150 participants from Asia and Pacific countries is expected. For more information, contact *Nimalka Fernando (APWLD) Tel. (941) 576563 Fax. (941) 575032.*

Workers plan to organize the Asia Pacific Conference

Asia Pacific Worker Solidarity Links together with other workers' organizations/ movement are planning to organize an Asia Pacific Workers Conference in November 1994 in Kathmandu. The theme of the conference may focus on the independent trade union as well as the key issues affected the workers e.g. structural adjustment, TNCs, working safety, health hazardous, etc. More information, contact *Robert Reid (APWSL, New Zealand) Tel. (644) 385 8264 Fax. (644) 384 8007.*

Asia Pacific Conference on East Timor

Asia Pacific Conference had been planned since the PP21 event in 1992 in Thailand. The Conference will be held from May 30 - June 4, 1994 in Manila, Philippines. There is some growing tension since the Philippines government tried to pressure the local organizer to stop the conference. This is due to the pressure of Indonesian government. It was expected that at least 200 participants will present at the conference. This Conference is very important in the sense that it aims to bring the East Timor issue right to where it belongs, asia, more specifically, Southeast Asia. So far the Conference, now, is being supported by more than a hundred organizations all over the world especially the People's Plan for the 21st Century (PP21), and the Asia Pacific Human Rights Organizations both local, and regional levels. The issue of East Timor will be highlighted during the time the conference taken place.

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Confirmation of the network and the Update Mailing address is needed.

This circular is intend to send to the participants who took part in/as

1) Peace and Human Rights Forum - PP21 Thailand (December 1992, Bangkok)
2) Asia Pacific NGO Conference on Human Rights (March 1993, Bangkok)
3) Asia Pacific participants to the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights (address is incomplete)
4) Bangkok NGOs Conference on Human Rights - Follow Up Meeting (February 1994, Bangkok)
5) Asia Pacific Consultation on World Summit for Social Development (May 1994, Bangkok)

The participants in the list above are requested to confirm your willingness to be part of the Asia Pacific Human Rights Collective and update your contact address by completing the form.

If your organization is willing to be part of the Asia Pacific Human Rights Collective please complete your form and return the form to us at the Liaison Service Secretariat or your contact amongst the Facilitating Team members.

All kind of contribution needed !

We welcome all kind of contribution you can given to us for the purpose of facilitating the work of the human rights in the region especially at the liaison secretariat. What we want from you are: letter-writing, update news, information available from your organizations/ groups/ country/ sub-region, some small token for postages or mailing cost, or some word of 'Hello' from you.

Send to us at : *Asia Pacific Human Rights NGOs - Facilitating Team*
c/o ACFOD
P.O. Box 26, Bungthonglang,
Bangkok ~~12024~~ 10242, Thailand
Fax: (662) 3740464 or 370 1202

Subscription Form to be part of Asia Pacific Human Rights NGOs Collective

My organization: _____

Contact Address: _____
_____
_____
_____

Telephone : _____
Fax : _____

Contact person : _____
Position : _____

Objectives of Organization:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Type of Organization/ Areas of Concern: (Please indicate)

Local/ National/ Sub-regional, Regional/ International

Children/ Women/ Worker/ Indigenous/ Peasant/ Youth-Students

Policy Advocate/ Legal Aid/ Action Group/ Coordinating Group

Human Rights Education-Training/ Information Center/ Campaign

Etc. _____

Activities : _____
_____
_____

Plan in 1994-95: _____
_____
_____

Publication : _____

Applicant : _____ **Position** : _____